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By James Marlow, AP News Analyst

Who's to Blame for Cuba Fiasco?

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the nation's top military planners, have been blasted since the Cuban invasion disaster.

This writer has been told reliably that President Kennedy is burned up at them and also at Allen Dulles, head of the Central Intelligence Agency CIA.

IT WILL BE NO surprise if he removes Dulles and shakes up the chiefs. But there is reluctance in the Defense Department from the top down to see the chiefs get clobbered -- for this reason:

Defense Secretary Robert McNamara himself approved the decision to let the invasion be made.

What follows is the story of what happened, made timely once more because of what occurred over the weekend after Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, testified before a Senate committee behind closed doors. Sen. Albert Gore, Tennessee Democrat, said the chiefs had "blundered incredibly" and should be thrown out. A milder reaction came from Sen. Styles Bridges, New Hampshire Republican.

He said it's an American habit to look for goats when things go wrong.

THOSE TAKING PART in the decision to the invasion to overthrow Fidel Castro were Kennedy, McNamara, Lemnitzer, Dulles and Secretary of State Dean Rusk, with McGeorge Bundy, Kennedy's special assistant on security, sitting in on all sessions.

These men had numerous meetings, went into all phases of the invasion exhaustively, including the possibility of failure.

Generally speaking, the decision to go ahead with the invasion was unanimous among all

those mentioned.

They made this decision knowing only about 1,200 men would be the invading force and that Castro had 35,000 tons of Soviet-built equipment and many thousands of men under arms.

Nevertheless, the White House group thought the odds were in favor of the invaders. Why?

They thought only one-third of the Cuban population was loyal to Castro and that the other two-thirds, once the invasion began, would rise up against him.

IN RETROSPECT, it seems incredible the decision for the invasion was primarily based on the assumption there would be an uprising, an uprising which never took place. The assumption had to be based on information about the Cuban people.

Dulles' CIA, which would be responsible for information on the mood of the Cuban people, saw its information was perfect. If it was, what went wrong?

This is the CIA's explanation: that the invasion had to be sustained to give the Cuban masses time to respond by an uprising. But it wasn't sustained. Why not? That's a part of the story which hasn't been revealed at all yet.

THESE WERE SOME of the reasons behind the White House decision to go ahead with the invasion:

• It was thought this was the last time the American government could assume Castro could be overthrown by anything short of direct American intervention.

• Continuation of the Castro regime is a danger to the United States in its relations with other Latin American countries.

• There was some puzzlement about what to do with the rebels -- if they didn't invade since they had been in retaining for a year. For instance, where, if they did not hit Cuba, could they have been absorbed?

• There was a "marginal" chance of overthrowing Castro.



Mr. Marlow